

## **FORK WITH TINE PROTECTOR GUARD AND METHOD**

### **5 FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

This invention relates to cooking utensils and more particularly to a large kitchen and barbecue fork for manipulating, lifting and turning food and as an adjunct in slicing meats, etc. and a guard for preventing injuries from sharp tines and preventing food contamination from the tines.

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### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Large kitchen and barbecue forks are well known in the art. They are used for manipulating, lifting and turning food and as an adjunct in slicing and cutting meats. They generally consist of a pair of sharp pointed tines, a handle and an intervening shank.

15 While large forks fulfill their common objectives and requirements, they suffer from a number of disadvantages such as injuries from their sharp pointed tines and contamination from dirt and bacteria. With these shortcomings in mind, it is obvious that a need exists to prevent injury and to prevent contamination of large kitchen and barbecue forks.

### **20 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention satisfies the heretofore described need. The invention resides in a movable guard which is slidably mounted on the shank of a large kitchen or barbecue fork. The guard is movable from a covering relationship with sharp pointed tines

to an uncovering relationship with the sharp pointed tines and is retained in either position. In a first embodiment, the guard is magnetically retained at the covering and uncovered positions. In a second embodiment, the guard is retained by friction.

Other objects and further scope of applicability of the present invention will become  
5 apparent from the detailed description given hereafter. It should be understood, however, that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating preferred embodiments of the invention, are given by way of illustration only, since various changes and modifications within the spirit and scope of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from this detailed description.

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

The invention will be better understood and further objects, characterizing features, details and advantages thereof will appear more clearly with reference to the diagrammatic drawings illustrating a preferred embodiment of the invention by way of non-limiting  
15 example only.

Fig. 1 is a plan view of a large culinary fork and a guard in a tine uncovering position.

Fig. 2 is a side view of the fork and guard.

Fig. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view taken on the line 3-3 in Fig.

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Fig. 4 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view taken on the line 4-4 in Fig. 1 showing the guard in a tine covering position.

Fig. 5 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of an alternate embodiment taken in the same manner as Fig. 3.

Fig. 6 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the alternate embodiment taken in the same manner as Fig. 4.

5 Fig. 7 is a plan view of a second alternate embodiment showing the guard in a time uncovering position.

Fig. 8 is a side view of the second alternate embodiment.

Fig. 9 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken on the line 9-9 in Fig. 8.

10 Fig. 10 is a plan view of a third alternate embodiment showing the guard in a time uncovering position.

Fig. 11 is a side view of the second alternate embodiment.

Fig. 12 is a fragmentary view showing the guard in a time covering position.

Fig. 13 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken on the line 13-13 in Fig. 12.

## 15 DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now in detail to the drawings for the purpose of illustrating preferred embodiments of the present invention, the culinary fork and guard 20 as shown in Figs. 1 through 4, cylindrical steel shank 23, attached at one end portion thereof to the handle 21; a forked end portion 24 attached to an opposite end portion of the shank 23, and a guard 25. The forked end portion 24 which is resistance welded to the shank 23 consists of an end portion having a pair of sharp pointed tines 26. The handle 21 and the attachment of the handle 21 to the end portion of the shank 23 are conventional. The

guard 25 is slidably mounted on the shank 23 and is moveable from an uncovering relationship with the sharp pointed tines 26 as shown in Fig. 3 to a covering relationship with the sharp tines 26 as shown in Fig. 4.

The guard 25 is comprised of a hub portion 27 which closely fits on the shank 23, an adjoining cover portion 28 and a permanent magnet 29 which is retained in the hub portion 27. The guard 25 is preferably made of a flexible polymer, woven ceramic cloth or a silica cloth and is coated with a non-stick fire resistant material, such as a TEFLON®. As later will be shown, in certain cases the guard may be made of a rigid ceramic material.

The permanent magnet 29, which is conventional, is a cylindrical sintered magnet 29. With reference to Fig. 4, at the end portion of the handle is the stamped steel trim collar 22 which is attracted by the magnet 29 to hold and retain the guard 25 in the tine uncovering position. With reference to Fig. 4, at the end portion of the shank 23 which is adjacent to the forked end portion 24 is a split steel collar 31. The collar 31 may optionally be formed by conventional cold upsetting the slender cylindrical steel shank 23. In the covering position, the tines 26 and their sharp end portions 32 are totally enclosed by the guard 26, thus preventing injuries from and the contamination of the food handling tines 26.

Referring now to Figs. 5 and 6, an embodiment 33 is shown wherein the guard 34 is made of a flexible material having a matrix of magnetic iron particles, thus eliminating the permanent magnet 29 of the preceding embodiment 20. In Figs. 7 through 9 inclusive, a second 35 embodiment is shown wherein the guard 36 is retained in the covering and uncovering positions by the friction of the guard 36 with the shank 23 of the fork 39.

In Figs. 10 through 13, an embodiment 38 is shown comprised of a straight fork 39, a rigid ceramic guard 40 and a permanent magnet 41 which is pressed or cemented to the guard 40.

Although only several embodiments have been described it is obvious that other  
5       embodiments can be derived by such obvious changes as inversion of elements, substitution of elements and changes in material, shape and composition without departing from the spirit thereof. By way of example, a pair of magnets, one at the tine end of a fork, the other at the handle end of the fork, and a ferro-magnetic insert in the tine protector could be used to retain the protector in the covering and uncovering positions. Such  
10       variations are not to be regarded as a departure from the spirit and scope of the invention, and all such modifications as would be obvious to one skilled in the art are intended to be included in the scope of the following claims.